

IAP Immunization Campaigns in Connecticut

CT Immunization Action Plan Program's Educational Efforts

IMMUNIZATION ACTION PLAN COORDINATORS & STAFF FOCUS ON PREVENTION THROUGH INITIATIVES

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- CT's 2015 Childhood Immunization Champion selected
- Statewide NIIW activities
- Preparing for NIAM in August
- National Influenza Vaccination Week
- Preteen & Teen Vaccine Campaign

The Connecticut Immunization Action Plan (IAP) Program conducts statewide programs to increase immunization levels among preschool children by engaging in activities designed to improve vaccine delivery, tracking and outreach referral, education and assessment. There are 11 sites in Connecticut. The goal of the IAP Program is to increase immunization levels among infants and toddlers while establishing a strong infrastructure with various community agencies and healthcare providers to increase access to well child care. The coordinator oversees and conducts services pertaining to community outreach, educa-

tion, and surveillance of vaccine preventable diseases. The staff conducts immunization education and information campaigns that help pregnant women, new parents and those who have recently moved into the state of CT. They review pediatric sites to maintain high standards of performance. Sites also assist the statewide, Connecticut Immunization Registry Tracking System (CIRTS). The main objectives of the program are: Give an overview of vaccine preventable diseases; Provide the most current information available about changes in vaccine delivery; Discuss the need for state and national immunization registries; Partner with other areas of con-

cern in preventive healthcare for children to help increase immunization services and well child care; Highlight information that pertains specifically to Connecticut; Encourage a dialogue for increasing communication between medical providers and parents in respect to vaccine delivery; and Provide resources for vaccine safety and storage.

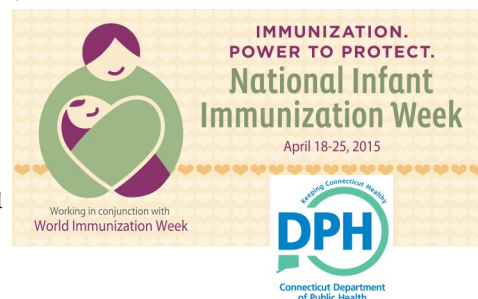
These articles highlight the campaigns conducted by the IAP programs during the year. Contact information for the coordinators is listed on the back page.

NATIONAL INFANT IMMUNIZATION MONTH (NIIW) ACTIVITIES HELD THROUGHOUT CONNECTICUT

National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW) is an annual observance to highlight the importance of protecting infants from vaccine-preventable diseases and celebrate the achievements of immunization programs and their partners in promoting healthy communities. Since 1994, hundreds of communities across the United States have joined together to celebrate the critical role vaccination plays in protecting our children, communities, and public health. NIIW, held April 18-25, 2015, was celebrated as part of World Immunization Week (WIW), an initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO). NIIW provides an opportunity

to: Highlight the dangers of vaccine-preventable diseases, especially to infants and young children, and the importance and benefits of childhood immunizations. Educate parents and caregivers about the importance of vaccination in protecting their children from birth and step up efforts to protect children against vaccine-preventable diseases and thereby give them a healthy start in life. Encourage better communication between parents and health care professionals. Remind parents and caregivers they need to make and keep needed immunization appointments.

Provide parents and caregivers with information to locate a facility that offers immunizations through the CT Vaccine Program, (a Vaccines for Children's program), a federally funded program that provides vaccinations at no cost to children whose parents cannot afford to pay for them. Activities were held in numerous locations throughout the state.



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IRIS VARGAS SELECTED AS CT'S CHAMPION

Iris N. Vargas, RN, from Optimus Health Care, has been named *CT's 2015 CDC Childhood Immunization Champion* for her outstanding efforts to promote childhood immunization in the greater Bridgeport area. Thousands of local children have received timely vaccines because of Vargas' dedication. In all regards, she has embodied the 4



criteria that make a health care provider a true Immunization Champion: leader-

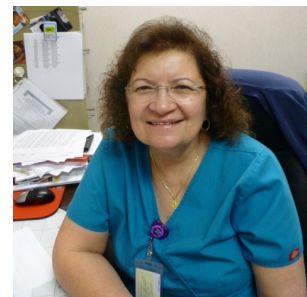
ship, collaboration, innovation and advocacy. "I know firsthand what these diseases can do," said Vargas. "I know the importance of vaccinating to prevent these diseases."

Each year during National Infant Immunization Week, the CDC Foundation and CDC honor health professionals and community leaders from around the country with the CDC Childhood Immunization Champion awards. These awards acknowledge the outstanding efforts of those individuals who strive to ensure that children in their communities are fully immunized against 14 preventable diseases before the age of two.

On April 23rd, the Bridgeport IAP Program, Southwestern AHEC and Optimus



Health staff hosted an awards reception to honor Iris. She received the CDC's award along with proclamations and citations



from the City of Bridgeport and the State of CT. Iris' over 30 years of experience in the community were evident by the volume of supporters in attendance. Congratulations!!!

NIIW IN TORRINGTON

The Torrington Immunization Program presented information on immunizations to parents while their children enjoyed learning about the flu in Torrington and Winsted. The Education Connection/Early Head Start playgroups hosted the coordinator as she discussed flu prevention and CT's Immunization Registry.



BRIDGEPORT PROMOTES CIRT

NIIW activities continued at the 2 Bridgeport Women Infant Children (WIC) offices. The Bridgeport IAP staff provided educational materials about vaccines to parents at their offices. They also identified a number of families whose young children were born outside of CT and therefore not in CT's statewide immunization registry. As a result of this effort, these children were added to CIRT, enabling parents to call upon this database in the future, for a complete record of their children's immunizations.

HARTFORD HOLDS "FASHION FOR SHOTS" EVENT



The Hartford Immunization Program hosted a "fashion show" featuring children sporting different vaccine preventable disease names while their parent described what the vaccine protects against. Families fashionably walked the red carpet. A question and answer session was held and door prizes were given out. This event was held on April 30th at the City of Hartford's Health and Human Services building.



"TAKE CARE, TEDDY BEAR" - DANBURY'S NIIW PROGRAMS



On April 21 & 23, the Danbury IAP Program visited two Danbury Public Schools preschool playgroups to encourage parents to keep up with well child check-ups and immunizations. The events were a great success. Each group had the opportunity to be the Doctor for our special "CIRT-Y" bear along with a story. Parents participated in this interactive activity and received our

special chart for a 'Well Bear Check-up' to record the results for their own budding doctors. Caregivers and children all sang a song with motions called 'Mr. Eddy had a Teddy' which tells about a sick bear and what his parent did to help him feel better. The IAP Outreach Staff remained for questions about vaccine topics and Immunization records on the CIRT registry.

NORWALK CELEBRATES NIIW EVENTS

Attendees of the NIIW Immunization Record Check stopped by the lobby outside of the WIC office at the Norwalk Health Dept. on two days in April to receive information regarding CIRT, childhood vaccines, vaccine safety and the whooping cough vaccine.



The Weston Women's League and Family and Children's Agency (FCA) of Norwalk hosted a celebration for families and

new babies enrolled in the agency's programs (Healthy Start, Mom's Project, Nurturing Families Network-Home Visits & Nurturing Families Network-Connections). The event was free of charge for FCA clients. The Norwalk IAP staff gave a bilingual-Spanish presentation to the attendees on the importance of immunization, the Connecticut Immunization Registry and Tracking System (CIRT), and shared tips on how to keep

children up-to-date with their vaccinations. The participants received gift bags filled with immunization and CIRT brochures, parent-held shot record booklets, and baby gift items imprinted with the Norwalk Immunization Program's contact information.



NEW BRITAIN'S IMMUNIZATION RECORDS NIGHT AT THE STADIUM



The New Britain Immunization Program and the New Britain Rock Cats Baseball Team have been partnering to promote well

child health for over 10 years. For NIIW, parents who brought their child's immun-

ization record to the stadium could have their child's record reviewed and receive a free child's ticket to the game. A local pediatrician was honored and threw out the first pitch. An immunization information table was set up with educational materials for parents and caregivers, and PSAs were made throughout the night.



The IAP Coordinator also provided a presentation on childhood immunizations, followed by a question and answer period at the CHC's Family Wellness Center during the Community Open Play-group. Free giveaways included baby bibs and children's books related to immunizations.



NAUGATUCK VALLEY'S STORY TIMES FOR TOTS



The Naugatuck Valley IAP Program participated in numerous story times in the area for children from birth to 5 years

of age. The Shelton Library hosts a "Fun for Little Ones" for babies to age 2. The Whittemore Memorial Library in Naugatuck has "Busy Bees" for babies and toddlers and their caregivers to encourage and reinforce pre-reading skills. Derby Public Library has a

Preschool Story Time for 3-5-year-olds includes stories, songs, rhymes, musical instruments, and movement in addition to a craft each week. Each of these venues hosted the IAP Coordinator in presenting a story about immunizations.

NIIW ACTIVITIES IN WEST HAVEN

The West Haven Immunization Action Plan (IAP) Coordinator hosted an educational table to discuss any questions/concerns

parents have about childhood immunizations. An educational video was played in the lobby of the Health Department: "Vaccines and Your Baby" & "Vaccines: Separating Fact from Fear." Diaper bags filled with goodies for parents with newborns were given out. If a parent brought a child's immuniza-

tion history with them, the IAP Coordinator discussed which shots to expect at the child's next visit. More info on this event and other activities are updated on their Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/WestHavenIAP>

Local IAP

Coordinators:

Bridgeport

Joan Lane
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Danbury area

Irene Litwak
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Hartford

Tish Ricks Lopez
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Naugatuck Valley area

Elizabeth Green
203-881-3255

New Britain area

Melanie Gedraitis
860-612-2777

New Haven

Jennifer Hall
203-946-7257

Norwalk area

Pam Bates
203-854-7728

Stamford area

Cinthia Vera
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Torrington area

Anastasiya Domnich-Kovalevsky
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Waterbury

Randy York
203-346-3907

West Haven area

Christine DePierro
203-937-3660 X 2045

Other areas

Summer Payne
860-509-7241

(Map)

http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/infectious_diseases/immunization/cirts/iap_map_2013.pdf



Each year in August, National Immunization Awareness Month (NIAM) provides an opportunity to

highlight the value of immunization across the lifespan. Activities focus on encouraging all people to protect their health by being immunized against infectious diseases.

The end of the summer brings the back-to-school rush, which includes necessary vaccines for school and college. It is also the start of the new flu season. This is a great time to focus on the ways we can encourage preventative behaviors that can

protect us from vaccine preventable diseases.

Medical providers and public health practitioners can use this month to raise awareness about vaccines and share strategies to increase immunization rates within their communities. Families can review their immunization records and encourage each other to complete recommended vaccines.

Local Immunization Action Plan coordinators look forward to assisting you in your efforts to raise both immunization rates and awareness. Feel free to contact them to arrange for a presentation or to obtain free immunization educational materials.

NIIW IN WATERBURY, STAMFORD & NEW HAVEN

The Waterbury IAP Coordinator was available to discuss immunization issues and review records at the Waterbury Health Department by the WIC office. Activities available included story-telling and free giveaways such as baby bibs bearing the immunization schedule and colorful brochures with helpful information.

Stamford celebrated children's health thanks to vaccines at the Stamford Government Center. The

Stamford Immunization Program was on hand to disseminate information and giveaways about immunization and also played a video about CIRTS.

The New Haven IAP Coordinator hosted an informational table to answer questions about immunizations at the New Haven Health Department.

NIIW ACTIVITIES IN NON-IAP AREAS

Not all cities and towns are in a region with an Immunization Action Plan coordinator at a local public health agency. Some parts of the state are covered by Department of Public Health's outreach coordinator. If your area is not listed in the column (on the left), please contact Summer Payne for education and outreach on CIRTS. (Click the "map" to see specific towns.)

For NIIW, Summer presented 16 practices in her area with a gift of educational materials collected

from the CT DPH, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the CDC. These materials included games for children, temporary tattoos for children, stickers, pens, posters, and pamphlets all aimed at promoting childhood immunization. Most of these materials are available through the links below:

<http://www.ct.gov/dph/immunizations>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/>

<http://www2.aap.org/international/>

NATIONAL INFLUENZA VACCINATION WEEK/PRETEEN VACCINE CAMPAIGN

There are two other special promotional campaigns that IAP sites conduct to increase public awareness of the importance of timely childhood immunizations: National Influenza Vaccination Week and a Preteen Vaccine campaign. Coordinators and outreach staff focus their efforts on the needs of their community in how best to reach residents who could benefit from education and referral services.

Many of the flu programs concentrate on pregnant women and birth through pre-school age children, as they are deemed at

high risk for hospitalizations and complications from the flu. Vaccination helps protect women during pregnancy and their babies for up to 6 months after they are born.

Preteen & Teen Vaccine campaigns emphasize completing vaccine schedules and gaining protection from 4 additional vaccines: Meningococcal, Tdap, HPV, and the Flu. This age group is at risk for diseases and need the protection of vaccines to keep them healthy. The vaccines for preteens and teens are important because as kids get older, protection from some childhood vaccines

begin to wear off and some vaccines work better when given during adolescence.

Professionals in the health/social service and medical community in the IAP's service area are offered opportunities to participate in educational in-services on these topics. IAP staff also provide assistance in obtaining current educational materials and resources for their patients and staff. Please contact your local IAP Coordinator to discuss having either a public event or training at your location on either of these campaigns.